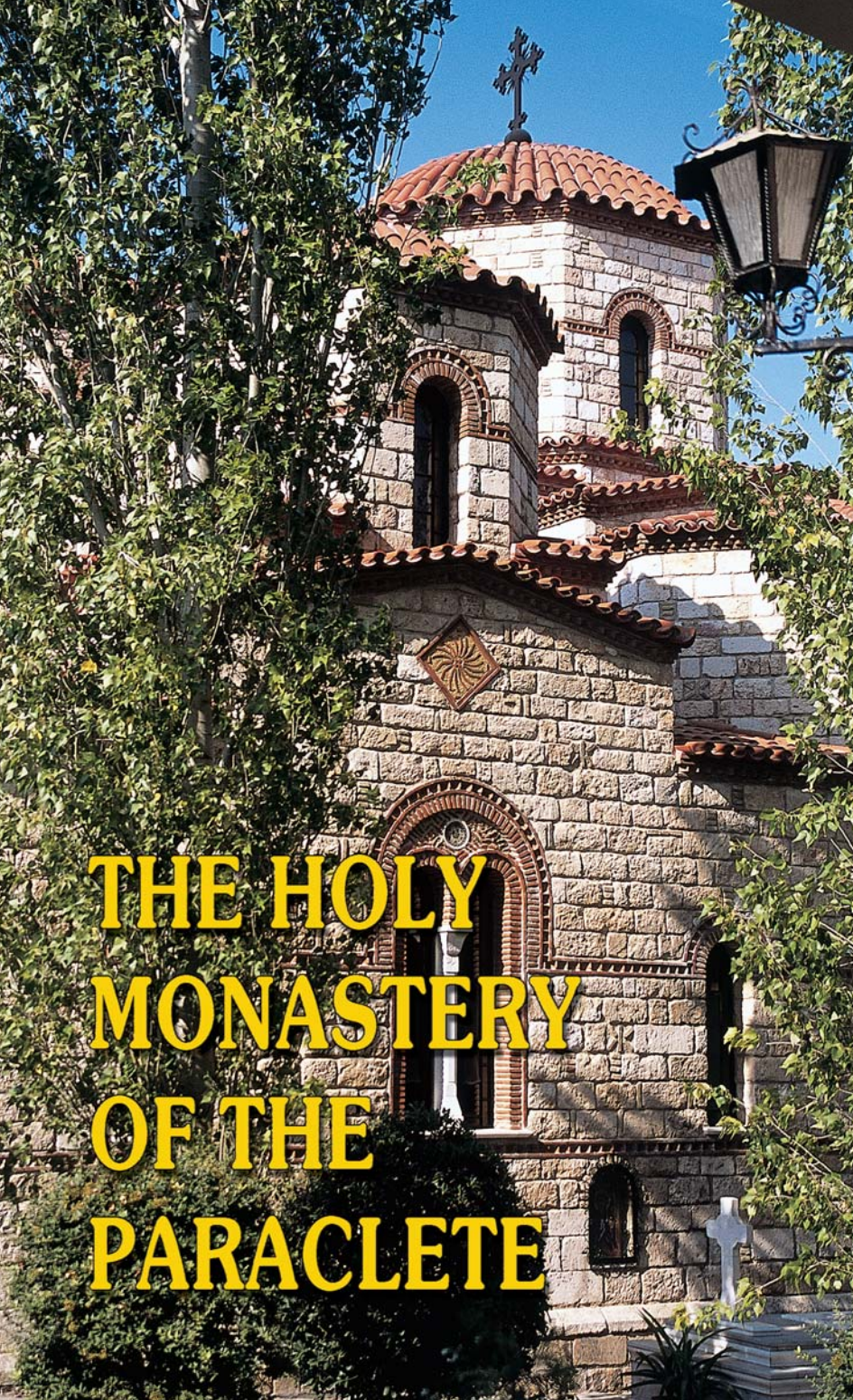

THE HOLY
MONASTERY
OF THE
PARACLETE

The Pentecoste
(Icon on the iconostasis of the Katholikon)

Brief History of the Monastery

IN THE beginning of August 1938, the steamer "Samos", carrying out the dull itinerary of Piraeus-Alexandroupolis-Kavala-Thessaloniki, reaches Daphne, the small port of Mount Athos. Among the few passengers to disembark is eighteen-year old George Karambelas from the village Constantines of Messinia.

The only son of the suffered widow Dimitra (†1973), who had lost her husband Michael (†1921) in the Asia Minor front of Greece's war on Turkey only two years after her marriage, left his mother and his home in Piraeus behind to live as a monk in the Garden of Virgin Mary, "between heaven and earth".

Following a brief pilgrimage in the blessed Athonite land, he decided to join a Kalyva (dwelling) in St. Anne's Skete, that of the Nativity of the Mother of God. There leading the ascetic life were the austere elder Gregory, former army officer, hieromonk Joachim

Archim. Cherubim (Karambelas, 1920-1979)
Founder of the Holy Monastery of the Paraclete

along with monks Stephen, Paisius and Gregory.

George was tried out as a novice for two years. In autumn 1940, a short time before the outbreak of Italy's war on Greece, he was tonsured a monk and received the name of Cherubim.

Nevertheless, God had other plans for him. In October 1942, elder Gregory was forced to send him to Athens as Fr. Cherubim's life was in danger by acute tonsillitis with complications to the heart and kidneys and he needed to be operated on.

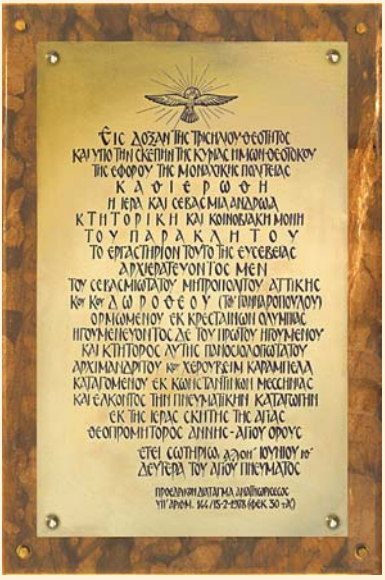
In such turbulent times (German-Italian occupation, Greek resistance, civil war), he was unable to return to the Holy Mountain. Meanwhile, the brethren of elder Gregory had been dispersed. Fr. Cherubim was thus obliged to settle temporarily in his family home in Piraeus.

There he became spiritually related to prominent ecclesiastical personalities, whose insisting pleads led him to be ordained deacon during Great Lent, on April 2, 1944. His ordination to priest-Archimandrite was to

follow much later, on December 20, 1955.

In 1947, Fr. Cherubim, along with the theologians Constantine Pouloupatis (later Archimandrite Ignatius) and George Karamantzanis (later Archimandrite Athinagoras) founded in Piraeus the monastic and missionary brotherhood of " The Paraclete" (Holy Spirit), organised in the cœnobitic way to serve the congregation in an Orthodox pastoral and catechistical manner.

According to the wishes of the founding fathers, the selection of a name for the brotherhood was left to the will of God. All three of them prayed warmly and then Fr. Cherubim opened the New Testament at random. His eyes fell on the following quotation: *"But when the Paraclete comes... the Spirit of truth..."* (John 15, 26). Instantly, all three knew in their hearts that it was God's will to name the brotherhood after the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, that of the Paraclete.



Memorial tablet of the Monastery's recognition

However, Fr. Cherubim, marked indelibly by his Athonite experience, always longed for the founding of a monastery, a traditional Orthodox resort for the therapy and sanctification of souls. He instilled his

pious desire to the other two fathers. And thus, fifteen years from the founding of the brotherhood, "God in his love and multifarious wisdom", as Fr. Cherubim wrote later, "using different ways, hard at times", made their wish come true.

In 1962, following an extensive search and a lot of prayer, they bought a piece of land at the site of Metochi in the Oropos region. Only three kilometres from the seaside of the gulf of Eubœa, it presented a serene landscape adorned with cypress, pine and olive trees. The site's name (metochi=dependency) implies that it used to be an old monastery dependency, belonging possibly to the Holy Monastery of the Dormition of Virgin Mary in mount Penteli. Besides, a few ruins and remnants of an old water duct indicate the settlement of ascetics at some unknown time.

The Katholikon (general view)

The foundation of the Monastery was laid in 1963, when the Holy Mountain was celebrating its millennium. This was a blessed coincidence for the beginning of the Monastery, not at all irrelevant to its subsequent history and

Interior of the Katholikon

spiritual identity. It should be noted that, during the decade 1968-1978, it was a dependency of the Athonite Monastery of St. Paul. Its official recognition from Church and State, as an independent cœnobitic monastery, came in 1978. The Monastery was thus placed under the jurisdiction of the Metropolis of Attica.

As defined in article 2 of its charter, the purpose of the Monastery is "the sanctification and the perfection in Christ of all its fathers by leading an accurate monastic life, as laid down by the Holy Fathers

General view of the Monastery

in their God-given and eternal monastic codes, and consolidated by the Holy Synods in their sacred and unshakeable canons, inspired and supervised by the Paraclete Holy Spirit, Who guides the Church '*into all the truth*' (John 16, 13)".

On June 19, 1978, the late Metropolitan Dorotheus (†1993) installed the Monastery's founder, Fr. Cherubim, as its first abbot. Unfortunately, he was to remain in this position only for one year. On August 22, 1979, following an operation in London, his weak heart led him to depart early to the Lord. He was only fifty-nine years old. Five days later, he was buried in the centre of his Monastery's courtyard, next to where the Katholikon would be built later on.

Those who were fortunate enough to have known elder Cherubim closely, had seen his plainness and gentleness, his love and humbleness, his indulgence and forbearance and had also admired his monastic morals, his patience of Job during trials, as well as his insight and perceptiveness. Throughout his life, he remained conscious of his Athonite spiritual descent. His word always evoked the air of the Garden of Virgin Mary, while his writings revealed to us many unknown figures and aspects of Athonite monasticism with his books "Contemporary ascetics of Mount Athos" and "Recollections of Mount Athos". Besides, it was his strong wish that the Monastery of the Paraclete should follow the Athonite typicon (order) and constitute a

General view of the Refectory

spiritual oasis for the crowded desert of Athens. He wanted it to be a testimony of Orthodoxy and cœnobitic monasticism next to the Greek capital.

Second abbot to serve from 1979 to 1980 was the first disciple of ever memorable Fr. Cherubim, Archimandrite Ignatius (Pouloupatis, 1927-1987), who had struggled hard with his elder to make the Monastery a reality. He is remembered for his mild character, his scholarship, his vast theological knowledge and his abundant service to the church.

Present abbot of the Monastery, having completed twenty years in office, is Archimandrite Timothy (Sakkas, born in 1933).

During the last two decades, the Monastery tripled its buildings thanks to its fathers' personal labour and immeasurable sacrifices. The most

important achievement of the period, a crowning blessing of the Paraclete, was the erection of the Katholikon. Its founding stone was laid on Sunday of Orthodoxy, 1987. The church was concluded in 1990.

The Hospitality of Abraham (Wall-painting in the Refectory)

It is of traditional monastic style, designed by Fr. Romanus (Alexopoulos) and modelled after the churches of Mount Athos and Meteora. A chapel of the Holy Angels occupies the southern side of the inner narthex. Fathers of the Monastery have crafted all the

Interior of the Library

icons of the church.

The Katholikon constitutes visually the central edifice of the Monastery, as well as its spiritual heart. Here the fathers perform daily all services, including Midnight Service, Matins, Divine Liturgy, Vespers, Compline. The circle of services begins two hours and a half after midnight and ends with sunset. During feast-days of Jesus Christ and of Virgin Mary, as well as on memory days of certain Saints, nightlong vigils take place according to the Athonite typicon.

Apart from the Katholikon, the complex of the Monastery includes: (a) the old central wing (the first building erected in 1963) with a chapel in the name of Saint Athanasius the Athonite (which served as temporary Katholikon until 1990), an adjacent chapel of Saint Stephen the First Martyr, the archontariki (guesthouse), the hegoumeneon (abbot's quarters) and monk cells; (b) a chapel of Saint John Climacus (1973); (c) the eastern wing (1975) with infirmary, dentistry, ward for the aged and monk cells; (d) the western wing (1981) with a chapel of Saint George the Great Martyr, the library, guest-rooms and monk cells; (e) the northern wing (1988) with a chapel in the name of Saint John the

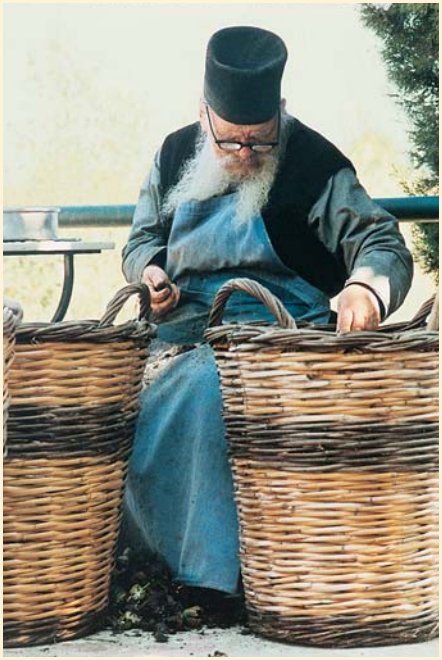
Part of the western wing

Forerunner, the synodicon (official gathering room), the synacticon (fathers' gathering room), iconography studio, publishing department, the refectory, cooking ward, docheo (cellar); and (f) a chapel dedicated to the Mother of God "Portaïtissa" (Gate-Keeper), built adjacent to the main gate.

The Monastery's library counts about twenty thousand volumes in Greek and other languages, mainly English, French and Russian.

Apart from the traditional cœnobitic diakonimata (tasks) of "ecclesiarch" (sacristan), "typicaris" (master of services), "archontaris" (guest master), "dochearis" (cellarer), cook, baker, gardener, tree-grower, vine-grower etc., the fathers engage in Byzantine iconography and editions of Orthodox Patristic contents. Up to this day and with God's help

The central courtyard



Work time

approximately seventy publications have been put in print.

In its effort to offer spiritual guidance to the Greek people, the Monastery prints sixteen-page leaflets with selected teachings of the Holy Fathers, rendered in modern Greek, and distributes them free of charge. More than five million leaflets have been put to circulation.

In recent years a similar effort was directed towards Orthodox people in other countries, primarily of Eastern Europe. Thousands of books and leaflets have been printed in various languages and dialects and have been disseminated free of charge to Russia, the Ukraine, Georgia, Poland, Slovakia, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, India etc.

Since the Monastery's founding, its many-faceted relationship to the Holy Mountain remains close. Brothers of the Monastery have restored and manned the Kelli of Saint Nilus the Athonite that belongs to the Monastery of Megisti Lavra.

In accordance with the ancient monastic tradition, and in particular the over a thousand years old Athonite one, women are not allowed in the Monastery.

In order to visit the Monastery, one should take the National Road (Athens-Lamia) and make an exit on the 39th kilometer, at the junction of Malakasa, taking the road to Oropos village. One kilometer after passing the village of Milesi, he will come across a row of cypress trees next to the gate of the Monastery.

Postal address:
The Holy Monastery of the Paraclete
GR-190 15 Oropos, Attica
Tel.: (0030) 22950-32475